

Recreation Resources on Fort Lewis

General Sports Facilities*

Jensen Gym & Aerobic Center 967-3508
Sheridan Sports Complex 967-5476
Sheridan Gym & Fitness Center 967-7311
Soldiers Field House 967-4771
SFH Sports Complex 967-2454
SFH Pool 967-6652
Keeler Gym & Fitness Center 967-6808
Keeler Sports Complex 967-7471
Keeler Pool 967-6652
Wilson Sports & Fitness Ctr 967-7471
North Fort Sports Complex 967-3842
McVeigh Racquetball & Fitness 967-6603

* Children under 11 not allowed.

Ages 11-15 must be accompanied by an adult.

Ages 16-18 may work out alone and check out basketballs.

Youth Centers/Facilities

Youth Center** 967-4441
Youth Fitness Zone 967-3188
Youth Activities/McChord AFB 984-2203

**Ages 10-13 must be accompanied by an adult.

Ages 13-18 may be unaccompanied.

The Issue of Childhood Obesity

Madigan Army Medical Center

Madigan Army Medical Center

Care with Compassion



Overweight and Obesity

The number of overweight and obese children in the United States is growing at a phenomenal rate. Today, 10% of 2- to 5-year-olds and more than 15% of children between the ages of 6 and 19 are overweight. And a whopping 31% of adults are also obese. Studies indicate that overweight and obese adolescents have up to an 80% chance of becoming overweight and obese adults, especially if one or more parent has the same condition.

Is Your Child Overweight or Obese?

Although you may think that your child is overweight or even obese, only a doctor should make that determination. Obesity is identified by a measurement called Body Mass Index (BMI). This is a measurement derived from height and weight calculated against that of other children of the same age. Children ranking higher than the 95th percentile of BMI for age are considered obese. Kids with a BMI score between the 85th and 95th percentile are considered at risk for becoming obese. And children who fall between the 5th and 85th percentile are considered normal weight.

The Effects of Overweight and Obesity

Not only are overweight and obese children at risk for serious health conditions like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, they're also prone to low self-esteem that stems from being teased, bullied, or rejected by peers. Overweight children are often the last to be chosen as playmates, even as early as preschool. They may also be more likely to develop unhealthy dieting habits and eating disorders, and they may be more prone to depression, as well as substance abuse.

Being overweight or obese can be associated with other medical conditions that affect quality of life:

- trouble with bones and joints
- shortness of breath that makes exercise, sports, or any physical activity more difficult and may increase the chances of developing asthma
- restless or disordered sleep patterns
- tendency to mature earlier (overweight kids may be taller and more sexually mature than their peers; overweight girls may enter puberty earlier, have irregular menstrual cycles, excessive body hair growth, and may experience potential fertility problems in adulthood)
- the presence of problems such as hypertension, lipid problems, insulin resistance, and type 2 diabetes, which can lead to cardiovascular disease
- liver problems
- depression

Serious adult medical conditions like heart disease, heart failure, stroke, and certain cancers can have their roots in childhood.

What Causes Obesity?

There are a number of factors that can cause obesity. If someone becomes overweight or obese, genetic factors, lifestyle habits, or both may be involved.

Much of what we eat is quick and easy - from fat-laden fast food to microwave and prepackaged meals. Plus, now, more than ever, life is sedentary - children spend more time playing with electronic devices, from computers to home video game systems, than actively playing outside. Television is a major culprit. Some people tend to eat more when they're feeling sad, stressed, or bored. Children will often pick up negative eating patterns from their parents. Certain endocrine problems, genetic syndromes, and medications can also be associated with excessive weight gain.

Genetics also plays a role - genes help determine how your body stores and burns fat just like they help determine other body traits. Because both genes and habits can be passed down from one generation to the next, multiple members of a family may struggle with weight.

People in the same family tend to have similar eating patterns, maintain the same levels of physical activity, and adopt the same attitudes toward being overweight. Studies have shown that a child's risk of obesity greatly increases if one or more parent is overweight or obese.

Madigan's Program

If your child is identified in a clinic visit as having a potential or real issue with overweight, you will be offered an appointment for further evaluation. This will involve an in-depth history and physical, and lab work for children over 10. Depending on the age of your child and other factors recognized during this appointment, you may be offered supporting opportunities to assist your family with this health issue, such as: nutritional care, physical activity recommendations and emotional support.

Overcoming Overweight and Obesity in Your Child

The key to keeping kids of all ages at a healthy weight is taking a whole-family approach. It's the "practice what you preach" mentality. Make eating and exercise a family affair. Avoid falling into some common food/eating behavior traps:

- **Don't reward children for good behavior or try to stop bad behavior with sweets or treats.**
- **Don't maintain a clean-plate policy.** Be aware of kids' hunger cues. If kids are satisfied, don't force them to continue eating. Reinforce the idea that they should only eat when they're hungry.
- **Don't talk about "bad foods"** or completely eliminate all sweets and favorite snacks from children's diets. Children may rebel and overeat these forbidden foods outside the home or sneak them in on their own.

Some Additional Recommendations for Children of All Ages

Birth to age 1: Some doctors feel that breastfeeding instead of using formula may help prevent excessive weight gain because breast feed babies are more able to control their own intake and follow their own internal hunger cues. Also, limit the amount of extra sugar infants get, particularly in what they drink; instead of lots of juice, offer water when they're thirsty.

Ages 1 to 6: Start good habits early. Limit children's TV time (better yet, leave the tube off) and increase their physical activity. Encourage children to eat healthy foods and only to eat when they're hungry. Make good foods fun and try to eat meals together as often as possible.

Ages 7 to 12: Encourage children to be physically active every day, whether it's a pick-up game of soccer or playing in a community sports league. Keep your kids active at home, too, through everyday activities like walking and or playing in the yard. Even basic household chores like vacuuming, washing the car, and raking leaves burn calories.

Ages 13 to 17: Teens like fast-food joints, but try to steer them toward healthier choices like grilled chicken sandwiches, salads, and smaller sizes. Encourage them to join a school sports team. If they don't feel very athletic, suggest a less competitive community program or **alternative** sport like skateboarding, inline skating, or mountain biking. Don't force any one sport or activity - help your children find what they enjoy and then support them in their efforts.

All ages: Cut down on TV, computer, and video game time, and discourage eating while watching the tube.

Most of all, let your children know you love them and that you want to help them be happy and healthy. If you, as a parent, eat well and exercise often and incorporate healthy habits into your family's daily life, you're modeling a healthy lifestyle for your children that could last into adulthood. Instead of constantly harping on kids to eat well and be active, make it a family affair that will become second nature for both you and your children.

Nutrition Resources on Fort Lewis

Nutrition Clinic* 968-0547
*Must have a consult from a physician

WIC 968-4772

Child/Youth Services

Web Resources:

www.kidshealth.org
www.bam.gov
www.kidsource.com
www.hooah4health.com
www.aap.org